

Andrew Jackson, March 4, 1829, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

ROUGH DRAFT OF THE FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS.¹

¹ This paper exists in Jackson's handwriting and it is called a "rough draft". It seems to be the original form of his inaugural address of 1829. Col. James A. Hamilton in his *Reminiscences* (pp. 104–106) pronounces the original draft "absolutely disgraceful". The paper, he says, was given to him on March 1 for criticism. He suggested several alterations and also submitted an entirely new address. Then followed a conference with Jackson, Lewis, and A. J. Donelson. He thought that the draft shown to him was largely the work of Lewis and Donelson. Hamilton could hardly have been talking about the same paper as this "rough draft", for he does not allude to the fact that it was in Jackson's handwriting. In the Jackson MSS. is a copy of the address in nearly the form in which it appears in Richardson's *Messages*. Hamilton's proposed copy is in his *Reminiscences* (p. 105). It is interesting to compare this "rough draft", which, besides the handwriting, has many internal marks suggesting that it was Jackson's, with these other two copies, Hamilton's and the copy actually delivered.

In view of Hamilton's assertions, the following letter from him to Maj. W. B. Lewis, Dec. 24, 1830, is of special interest:

"Your letter of the 20th Inst. in which you state that letters have been received in Washington stating that one of my brothers has been heard to say that I had written the Presidents inaugural address and that Mr. Van Buren wrote his last message and I corrected it, was received yesterday and immediately communicated to my Brothers who all state most unequivocally that they have never said any thing of the kind and they authorise me to assure you that the statement is false in all its parts. Alexander has sent me a written statement to that effect and the other two are ready to do the same if

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required. This is a part of the tactics of the enemy, their game is desperate and will be played in any way however unworthy. You are authorised to use this letter as you please. I remain Your friend and Svt.”

[March 4, 1829.]

Fellow citizens , About to enter upon the duties to which as President of the United States, I have been called by the voluntary suffrages of my country, I avail myself of this occasion to express the deep and heartfelt gratitude with which a testimonial of such distinguished favor has been received. To be elected under the circumstances which have marked the recent contest of opinion to administer the affairs of a government deriving all its powers from the will of the people, a government whose vital principle is the right of the people to controul its measures, and whose only object and glory are the equal happiness and freedom of all the members of the confederacy, cannot but penetrate me with the most powerful and mingled emotions of thanks, on the one hand, for the honor conferred on me, and on the other, of solemn apprehensions for the safety of the great and important interests committed to my charge.

Under the weight of these emotions, unaided by any confidence inspired by past experience, or by any strength derived from the conscious possession of powers equal to the station, I confess, fellow citizens, that I approach it with trembling reluctance. But my Country has willed it, and I obey, gathering hope from the reflection that the other branches of the Govt. with whom the constitutional will associates me, will yield those resources of Patriotism and intelligence, by which the administration may be rendered useful, and the honor and independence of our widely extended Republic guarded from encroachment; but above all, trusting to the smiles of that overruling Providence, “in the hollow of whose hand,” is the destiny of nations, for that animation of common council and harmonising effort, which shall enable us to steer, the Bark of liberty, through every difficulty.

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In the present Stage of our history, it will not be expected of me on this occasion to enter into any detail of the first principles of our government. The achievements of our fathers, our subsequent intercourse with each other, the various relations we have sustained with the other powers of the world, and our present attitude at home, exhibits the practical operations of these principles, all of which are comprised in the sovereignty of the people. This is the basis of our system, and to its security from violation and innovation must our practice and experience as a government be dedicated. To the administration of my illustrious predecessors I will be permitted to refer as mirrors not so much for the measures which m[a]y be demanded by the present state of the country, but as applications of the same principles to the various exigencies which have occurred in our history, and as shedding light upon those which may hereafter arise. It is thus the great moral race we are running, connects us with the past, and is tributary to the events which are to come: thus, that every period of our Government is useful to that which follows, not as the source of principles, but as guides on that sacred fountain to which we must often go for the refreshment of our laws, and the invigoration of the public morals. It is from this source that we derive the means of congratulating ourselves upon the present free condition of our country, and build our hopes for its future safety. In fine, Fellow Citizens, this is the bulwark of our liberties.

Among the various and important duties that are confided to the President, there are none of more interest than that which requires the selection of his officers. The application of the laws, and the management of our relations with foreign powers, form the chief object of an Executive, and are as essential to the welfare of the union as the laws themselves. In the discharge of this trust it shall be my care to fill the various offices at the disposal of the Executive with individuals uniting as far as possible the qualifications of the head and heart, always recollecting that in a free government the demand for moral qualities should be made superior to that of talents. In other forms of government where the people are not regarded as composing the sovereign power, it is easy to preceive that the safeguard of the empire consists chiefly in the skill by which the monarch can wield

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the bigoted acquiescence of his Subjects. But it is different with us. Here the will of the people, prescribed in a constitution of their own choice, controuls the service of the public functionaries, and is interested more deeply in the preservation of those qualities which ensures fidelity and honest devotion to their interests.

Provisions for the national defence form another class of duties for the Representatives of the people, and as they stand in delicate connection with the powers of the general and state Governments, when understood to embrace the protection of our own labour, merit the most serious consideration. Legislation for this object encouraging the production of those articles which are essential in the emergencies of war, and to the independence of the nation, seems to me to be sanctioned by the constitution, as lawful and just. The general safety was the great motive for the confederation of the states, and never could have been effected without conferring on the Federal Government the power to provide those internal supplies which constitute the means of war, and which if left to the ordinary operations of commerce, might be withheld at a time when we most needed them. Judicious Tariff imposing duties high enough to insure us against this calamity will always meet with my hearty cooperation. But beyond this point, legislation effecting the natural relations of the labour of the states are irreconcilable to the objects of the Union, and threatening to its peace and tranquility.

Recollecting that all the states are equal in sovereignty, and in claims to the benefits accruing from the confederation, upon the federal principle of providing by taxation for the wants of the Government, it seems Just that the expenditures should be distributed regard being first paid to the national debt, and the appropriations for the support of the Government, and safety of the Union. The necessity of conforming more closely to this principle is illustrated by the dissatisfaction which the expenditures for the purposes of improvement has already created in several of the states. The operation of the principle, as fixed on this equitable basis, will give to the states the fisical prosperity of the nation, and secure harmony by removeing the grounds of Jealousy.

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Between the powers granted to the general government, and those reserved to the states and the people, it is to be regretted that no line can be so obviously drawn as that all shall understand alike its boundaries. There will be a territory between them which must be governed by the good sense of a nation always ready to resist oppression, and too high minded to forget the rights of the minority. It is the inheritance of that sentiment of conciliation, and spirit of compromise which gave us the constitution, and which is to enable us in the progress of time to amend such defects in the system as experience may detect. Fully sensible of the necessity which I shall have for the exercise of this spirit on the part of my fellow Citizens, I shall notice with pleasure an unreserved examination of the measures of my administration, and shall be the last to cry out treason against those who interpret differently from myself the policy, or powers of the government.

Some of the Topics which shall engage my earliest attention as intimately connected with the prosperity of our beloved country, are, the liquidation of the national debt The introduction and observance of the strictest economy in the disbursements of the Government, a Judicious tariff, combined with a fostering care of commerce and agriculture, and regulated by the principles before adverted to, a Just respect for state rights and the maintainance of state sovereignty as the best check of the tendencies to consolidation; and the distribution of the surplus revenue amongst the states according to the apportionment of representation, for the purposes of education and internal improvement, except where the subjects are entirely national. With the accomplishment of these objects I trust the memorials of our national blessings may be multiplied, and the scenes of domestic labour be made more animating and happy.²

² In a speech in the House of Representatives in 1833, James K. Polk said that Jackson had assured him that his views on the bank were in the original draft of the inaugural address of 1829, but that after his arrival in Washington and on the advice of friends they were omitted. The draft here submitted does not sustain Polk's statement. See *Congressional Globe*. vol. X., pt. 2, p. 2263; see also Meigs, *Life of T. H. Benton*, p. 195.

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Another matter that was not in the inaugural address was Jackson's previously avowed belief that a man should be President only one term. John H. Houston, writing to A. J. Donelson on behalf of the Jackson men in Pennsylvania, Feb. 23, 1829, urged that nothing of that kind go into the inaugural address. He said the Pennsylvanians wished Jackson to be a candidate for re-election in 1832. All Jackson men opposed to Calhoun for President took that position.